

WALK 9

This walk is approximately 6.5 miles, takes about 3 hours and passes 2 castles. Can be very muddy in places. Stiles 3.

EDENBRIDGE to HEVER

1. From High Street, turn into Church Street and start at church lych gate, follow outside of church wall, turn left at first set of iron gates and through Cemetery One. On opposite side turn right down path, through kissing gate and into cul de sac (Churchfield). Leaving cul de sac turn right and take track immediately on left over railway (SR604). At end of track pass through kissing gate and bear right into field (allotments on right) with small pond on left. Follow trees on left (passing small pond) to bottom left corner. Turn right (SR608), continue ahead, keeping hedge on left. Make for stile straight ahead. Continue through field along left hand edge, over footbridge, to kissing gate ahead. Go up hill straight across field, passing to right of group of trees (with a pond), to a metal gate. There are lovely views over surrounding countryside. Continue ahead, alongside hedge on left, and before reaching corner of field turn right (SR559). Cross field, over brow of hill, following path downhill. Through kissing gate, cross River Eden with Delaware Farm to right. Continue along track to concrete road, which bears left alongside pond within boundaries of dwellings, and straight ahead to Hever Road.

2. Watch out for traffic. Cross road to footpath waymarking post. Turn right, alongside hedge on right and fence on left. Turn left through kissing gate and head towards railway and ladder steps over railway line. Turn left along bottom of embankment, ignoring steps, and keep ahead almost to the corner. Turn right through gate and under railway arch. Turn diagonally left across field to gap in corner blocked by a tree trunk, and go through gap to right of the trunk to access Lydens Lane.

Turn right along lane to entrance to Leydens Barn. Turn left into farm (SR577) with oast house on left and follow waymarkers through gap between buildings ahead and into rear garden. Turn left before bridge, through gate. Keeping stream on right, head towards house. Turn right onto farm track, then right of barn, follow SR577 through one gate, then further gate, following hedge on left. Cross stile. At bend in hedge, where it goes to the left, continue straight across field aiming for power pole, and turn right to continue up field. Hever Station now lies to your left. The way forward is concealed in furthest left corner. Through kissing gate and onto a wooded path alongside railway embankment. Continue straight along path, past houses on right until reaching tarmac road.

3. Turn left along road up to junction ahead. SR576. Cross and continue along sign posted footpath, over stile, past ponds on right (can be very muddy) until it opens out onto Hever Road. Watching out for traffic, turn right and continue downhill until reaching bus shelter. Take road on left and follow as it bends round to right and up incline. Walk round corner to left, past Henry VIII pub, then turn right through lych gate into St Peter's churchyard. Inside charming church, with its slender spire, is tomb of Sir Thomas Bullen, father of Anne Boleyn. Beside church is entrance to beautiful Hever Castle, childhood home of Anne Boleyn, with its rose gardens.

HEVER to CHIDDINGSTONE

4. Follow path to rear of churchyard and down to small bridge. Continue straight ahead following path between the fences with Hever Castle's grounds on left. Castle is not visible from path. After a while path turns right. Continue on track. Follow path round, until reaching a gate and some buildings. Go through gap in hedge to left of

gate. Continue on path, cross track, and take path between footpath post and red letter box. Continue on path that runs alongside a fence on left and property to the right.

At bottom of hill, cross road and on to another path opposite. Through kissing gate, SR527, continue along path, through gate and over footbridge. Up steep path of "steps" and continue straight ahead. Continue, ignoring wide track on right. Through kissing gate and continue to junction, then turn left (SR531). Track passes through rocks, before leading to Hill Hoath.

5. At Hill Hoath pass in front of a low lying half timbered house called Withers, on left, and turn right up lane. Then turn left and walk past Hill Hoath cottages towards gate. SR529. Continue straight ahead to kissing gate. At fork turn left and continue to kissing gate.

At this point, either turn right to continue on the Eden Valley Walk to Penshurst (with Walk 10) or proceed to the very pretty village of Chiddingstone, using the following.

Through kissing gate. Turn left and walk up hill through field, reaching a path bordered by hedgerows with playing fields to right. Follow path until road, then turn left to walk 50 yards into Chiddingstone.

Footpath to Chiding Stone on left. In village is Chiddingstone Castle, a traditional squire's house with charm of a fantasy castle and eclectic Japanese and Egyptian collections; lovely St Mary's Church, with series of strange stone faces high on west tower; Castle Inn pub; and tea room (when open).